

title 42 policy at our southern border. We cannot continue these hateful and xenophobic Trump policies that disregard our refugee laws. We must allow asylum seekers to present their claims at our ports of entry and be afforded due process.

I commit to work with this administration to provide resources so that we can establish safe, orderly, and humane processes for those seeking protections. Again, the policies that are being enacted now and the horrible treatment of these innocent people who have come to the border must stop immediately.

MEASURE PLACED ON THE CALENDER—S. 2765

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I understand there is a bill at the desk that is due for a second reading.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The leader is correct.

The clerk will read the bill by title for the second time.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 2765) to provide that Members of Congress may not receive pay after October 1 of any fiscal year in which Congress has not approved a concurrent resolution on the budget and passed the regular appropriations bills.

Mr. SCHUMER. In order to place the bill on the calendar under the provisions of rule XIV, I would object to further proceeding.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Objection having been heard, the bill will be placed on the calendar.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from California.

Mr. PADILLA. Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. PADILLA). Without objection, it is so ordered.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Republican leader is recognized.

TAXES

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, the senior House Democrat told us back in March of 2020 that COVID presented “a tremendous opportunity to restructure things to fit our vision.”

President Biden said last week that “while this pandemic has been godawful for so many reasons . . . it does present us with an opportunity.”

The reckless taxing-and-spending spree that Washington Democrats are assembling behind closed doors would put more debt, more borrowing, and

more inflation on the shoulders of American families. It would make Washington, DC, dramatically more involved in families’ childcare, their health coverage, their local energy utilities, and on and on.

There are so many controversial changes being crammed into one mega bill that it must be a deliberate strategy: try to achieve everything the far left has wanted for 20 years in one fell swoop before the country has time to realize what hit it.

So today, I am going to focus on just one example. Let’s look at the tax hikes, a staggering historic set of tax hikes; tax hikes on small business, tax hikes on family farms, tax hikes on Americans that would shatter the pledge to spare people earning less than \$400,000 a year, tax hikes that would put even more Americans into unfair double taxation of the death tax, massive taxes on the U.S. economy that would give us one of the least competitive tax structures in the developed world.

For example, even Communist China taxes their own businesses significantly less than President Biden and his allies want America to tax ours.

Tax hike after tax hike after tax hike—a smothering wet blanket thrown onto an economy that is already struggling to fully recover because of the inflation and worker shortages that Democrats’ policies have already unleashed.

So when you add it all up, Democrats want to ram through one of the largest peacetime tax hikes on record, if not the single largest. So let me say that again. Behind closed doors, Washington Democrats are drafting what may very well be the largest peacetime tax hike that our country has literally ever seen.

But this isn’t to say that nobody gets a leg up in this bill. So listen to this. Somehow, mysteriously, many of the Democrats’ favorite groups and special interests come out just fine. Isn’t that fascinating?

For example, their legislation would allow ordinary Americans’ charitable deduction on top of the standard deduction to expire. Ah, but they would replace it with a brandnew tax break of almost exactly the same dollar amount for union dues that go to Big Labor. So you take out a charitable deduction for regular Americans, put in a new one for union dues that would benefit Big Labor. They are scrapping Americans’ extra deduction for donating to charity and replacing it with a special subsidy for union dues for Big Labor.

Really, you can’t make this stuff up. Sorry, Red Cross. Sorry, local churches and houses of worship. Sorry, soup kitchens. Democrats think the Teamsters and the SEIU need the money more than you do.

And they aren’t the only group that Democrats favor, who literally make out like bandits. Look at high-income earners in coastal blue States. The bill that raises taxes on everything that

moves somehow—somehow—makes room for a special, gigantic tax cut for wealthy people who choose to live in high-tax States. More than half the benefit of the so-called SALT policy would go to the top 1 percent of households.

There is also a special tax break for people who choose to purchase expensive electric cars. You get the picture: make U.S. industry less competitive than China in order to massively subsidize the coastal cosmopolitan lifestyle. That is what the Democrats want.

This bill would also create a new national dragnet for ordinary Americans’ banking information. Community banks and credit unions would be hammered with new requirements to report to the feds whenever citizens make transactions—listen to this—in excess of \$600. Community banks and credit unions would have new requirements to report to the Federal Government whenever citizens make transactions in excess of \$600.

Big Brother wants to peer into America’s bank accounts. Here is how one local Kentucky lender described this concept to me: a “flagrant violation of privacy and offense to liberty.”

That pretty well sums it up. So, huge tax hikes on Americans, expensive giveaways for coastal elites, and new government snooping—snooping—into families’ finances.

So that is just one corner of this reckless taxing-and-spending spree that should never see the light of day.

ELECTIONS

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, now on a different matter. Last week, Senate Democrats announced what was marketed as a compromise on carving out a bigger role for Washington in elections all across our country.

It was hardly the first time our Democratic colleagues had given their takeover of 50 States’ election laws a makeover. Over the years, it has sometimes been sold as an urgent overhaul of our democracy; other times as just a set of narrow tweaks. But for all of their attempts to change up the pitch, the unfortunate fact is that the bones of the Democrats’ proposal are still the same.

The latest version is only a compromise in the sense that the center left compromised with the far left. Under the hood is the same Frankenstein’s monster that has been there since 2019, years—years—before the State-level actions which Democrats now claim have made it all necessary.

It still makes Washington bureaucrats the de facto board of elections for all 50 States, dictating the terms of things like automatic and same-day voter registration. It still insists on impeding State efforts to ensure integrity of voter rolls through popular, commonsense voter ID measures. It still has government dollars going directly to politicians’ campaigns—that

is the public funds for bumper stickers and attack ads. It still empowers partisan regulators to circumvent the bipartisan FEC and engage in even more intimidation of private citizens who engage in political speech. And these, of course, are just to name a few.

Now, surely, as the Senate continues to do its job and strike down misguided ideas like these, we will hear plenty from folks who consider it evidence that this body is broken. But, of course, that simply is not true. The Senate is fully capable of taking landmark, bipartisan action that makes it easier to vote and harder to cheat.

Back in 2002, I was involved, along with my colleague Chris Dodd, in passing the Help America Vote Act. I was one of the leaders on that. We empowered State and local election systems to follow commonsense guideposts for integrity and accessibility. It provided basically a grant program to States to help them upgrade their voter systems after the Florida election in 2000. And the Senate passed it 92 to 2—92 to 2.

So if our Democratic colleagues really want to find common ground and act on common sense, the roadmap is right there. But, unfortunately, we know that has never been the case.

Unfortunately, this latest “compromise” is just a repackaging of what even reporters called a messaging bill that was headed nowhere. The substance is not really changing, so neither will the result.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is closed.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Also under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to executive session to resume consideration of the following nomination, which the clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read the nomination of Margaret Irene Strickland, of New Mexico, to be United States District Judge for the District of New Mexico.

Mr. McCONNELL. I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

NOMINATION OF MARGARET IRENE STRICKLAND

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, today the Senate will vote on the nomination of Margaret Strickland for the U.S. District Court for the District of New Mexico.

For nearly 15 years, Ms. Strickland has served the people of New Mexico as a public defender and a civil rights attorney. With her extensive qualifications and distinguished career in public service, Ms. Strickland will make an excellent addition to the New Mexico District Court.

She began her legal career in the Law Offices of the Public Defender for the State of New Mexico, a role in which she handled nearly every type of criminal case. Over the years—and this is an amazing number—she has tried nearly 90 cases. The vast majority of her practice has been in Federal court.

Here in the Senate, Ms. Strickland boasts the strong support of her home State Senators, Senators HEINRICH and LUJÁN. Her nomination also received bipartisan support in our Judiciary Committee. She received a “well qualified” rating from the American Bar Association.

And like so many of the nominees coming from the Biden administration, she really shows professional diversity in her background. As a former public defender and civil rights attorney, she will offer a legal perspective that we often find missing from the bench. She has demonstrated an unwavering commitment to equal justice under the law, and as a judge, she will ensure that every voice is heard in the courtroom.

I urge my colleagues to support her nomination.

BUSINESS BEFORE THE SENATE

On another note, Mr. President, in the coming days, this Senate has a historic decision to make and very little time to make it. We have to set aside politics, which the American people are begging us over and over to do, and we have to ensure that our government can continue to function in the midst of this public health crisis and a recovering economy. Now, in any reasonable scenario, these would be noncontroversial and nonpartisan endeavors, but sadly, at this moment in the U.S. Senate, reason is in short supply.

In recent days, some of our colleagues on the other side of the aisle have indicated that they are prepared to—listen to this—sabotage the routine process of government for political reasons. This could have a catastrophic impact on this Nation.

Last week, Senator McCONNELL reiterated that Republicans will not join Democrats in voting to deal with the debt limit. What exactly does it mean? Well, imagine if you and I just up and decided to stop paying your credit card bills. If Congress fails to raise or suspend the debt limit before the Treasury runs out of cash, our Nation runs the risk of default for the first time in history. That is why lawmakers have to set aside politics, as we have done

nearly 80 times in our history, to keep the government's bills being paid. Truthfully, this shouldn't even be a debate.

Raising or suspending the debt limit has nothing to do with any new programs or new spending. It is about paying off the tab that the government has already incurred. We are receiving the bill at the restaurant after we have had the big meal; the question is whether we will pay it.

Here is the kicker: Much of the debt that the Republicans are threatening not to pay was approved by Senate Republicans when Donald Trump was in the White House. In other words, we are being asked to approve the Trump debt from his years in the Presidency, which largely had the support of the Republicans, and the Republicans are telling us: “Hands off. We won't accept responsibility for the things we voted for during the Trump years.”

The last time Congress suspended the debt limit was in August 2019, a little over halfway through President Trump's term. Between then and the beginning of President Biden's term, congressional Republicans approved \$6 trillion in new debt. In fact, during Trump's one term in office, the national debt ballooned by 36 percent. Fiscal conservatives? During the Trump administration, the national debt ballooned by 36 percent. Well, that surely has happened before in history? No, I am sorry, it has not. That is the fastest it has grown under any President in American history. The Trump years were the biggest debt years in the history of the United States, and now the Republicans don't recognize it. They want to walk away from it.

You may be wondering: For what noble or productive purpose did the Republicans go so deep in debt during the Trump years? Well, a big chunk of it was Donald Trump's tax giveaway to the richest Americans—\$2 trillion—\$2 trillion in tax cuts for people at the superwealthy level in America. And now it is time to say to the Republicans: You voted for those tax cuts. The wealthiest people in America applauded you. Now would you at least step up and admit it?

Nope. Now that it is time for Republicans to pay for the meal that they ate, the political banquet, they are vowing instead to dine and dash. They are taking a page straight from the playbook of Donald Trump, the man who called himself proudly “the king of debt,” a man who didn't pay his own bills as a businessman and who incurred the largest increase in the national debt of any President in history. And in the process, the Republicans—to take this incredible and inexplicable stand—are willing to risk the full faith and credit of the United States.

When it comes to America's debt, default is simply not an option for any rational person. There is not a single American who will emerge unscathed if the Republicans execute this political strategy. Defaulting on our debt